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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 03/15/07

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- 19) Foreign Minister Aso to visit South Korea on March 31
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Articles:

1) TOP HEADLINES

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Tokyo District Court rules pediatrician's suicide was work-related death, cites his working on night duty eight times per month as overfatigue

Mainichi, Yomiuri & Tokyo Shimbun:

ANA accident: Detached bolt the likely cause of landing gear failure

Nihon Keizai:

Government to establish by this summer a clear standard for taxation on profits from intangible assets like technology and brand names

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Sankei:

Chinese-Americans made \$110,000 in contributions to Congressman Honda last year; Honda working with anti-Japanese organizations to pursue "comfort women" issue

Akahata:

Health minister's advisory panel decides not to time-limit rehabilitation for some diseases, including heart disease

2) EDITORIALS

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- (1) ANA accident: Why did emergency device not function?
- (2) Firm bears a heavy responsibility for leak of personal information

Mainichi:

- (1) Agriculture Minister Matsuoka not fit for the post
- (2) Leading firms' wage hikes: Don't leave small business workers and part-timers behind

Yomiuri:

- (1) Spring labor offensive: Will pay raises spread to small business workers and part-timers?
- (2) Politics and money: The system needs to be reviewed swiftly

Nihon Keizai:

- (1) Management decides to hike wages, but with priority given to staying competitive
- (2) Problems in US housing market lie behind falling stocks

Sankei:

Six-party talks: Concern about being betrayed by America

Tokyo Shimbun:

- (1) Utility costs: Make Agriculture Minister Matsuoka speak
- (2) Spring labor offensive: We hope the trend for pay hike will gain momentum

Akahata:

National referendum bill intended to make it easy to amend the Constitution

3) Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei)

Prime Minister's schedule, March 14

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)
March 15, 2007

09:30

Met Justice Minister Nagase at the Kantei, followed by Vice Health and Welfare Minister Tsuji, Social Security Agency Director General Murase, and others.

10:21

Met a delegation of the Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology, which will open a school in Thailand, in the presence of Lower House member Seiken Sugiura and others. Afterward, met Vice Foreign Minister Yachi and Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau chief Sasae. Yachi stayed on.

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11:20

Met National Police Agency Director-General Uruma.

12:03

Had lunch with LDP first-term lawmakers and others.

13:35

Met LDP Secretary General Nakagawa.

14:33

Met Israeli Vice Premier Peres, Palestinian negotiator Erakat, and other confidence-building meeting members.

15:20

Met LDP Policy Research Council Chairman Nakagawa, followed by Advisor Nakatani.

17:08

Met Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Matoba, followed by FIA President Max Mosley and others.

18:04

Industrial Revitalization Corporation of Japan President Saito and others.

18:44

Met at the Akasaka Prince Hotel with former Japan Business Federation Chairman Okuda and others.

20:34

Returned to his official residence.

4) Poll: 70% negative toward US plan to send additional troops to Iraq

ASAHI (Page 9) (Abridged slightly)
March 15, 2007

People in Japan, Australia, Britain, Poland, and other US allies are becoming increasingly skeptical of the Bush administration's policy toward Iraq, where the security situation is worsening.

In a nationwide opinion poll conducted recently by the Asahi Shimbun, 70% of the respondents took negative views on President George W. Bush's new Iraq strategy to send additional troops to that country. Negative views came even from 52% of those who said "the Iraq war was correct" and 55% of people who indicated that "America's military action has helped constrain terrorism."

At the same time, 69% of all respondents expressed opposition to extending the Iraq Special Measures Law. Opposition also came from 58% of those supporting the Abe cabinet and the Liberal Democratic

Party. Views split among those who said the war was correct, with 48% expressing support and 47% opposition. With the law scheduled to expire in July, heated debate is expected to take place over the appropriateness of its extension.

Polls were also conducted in Australia, whose troops conducted activities with Japan's Ground Self-Defense Force troops in the southern Iraqi city of Samawah. According to Newspan, a private research organization, 46% of respondents said in a February 2004

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survey that Australia's Iraq mission was "worthwhile," while 45% indicated it was "not worthwhile." But in a survey last December, 71% of respondents called it "not worthwhile."

The Sydney Morning Herald's Marian Wilkinson, a senior security writer, attributed the growing public opposition to the Australian government's decision to keep its troops in Iraq for training local security troops even after the GSDF left the country last July.

Surveys took place in Britain, as well, where Prime Minister Tony Blair has announced a plan to gradually withdraw from Iraq. In a poll conducted by the Times this past January, 60% of respondents called for an immediate withdrawal, while only 31% urged British troops to remain in Iraq until it becomes stable.

Severe views on the United States are also beginning to show in Poland, as well, which is committed to Iraq. In a poll conducted by the BBC in January, favorable feelings toward the United States dropped from last year's 62% to 38%. In addition, 52% of the people said they do not support America's Iraq policy.

5) Poll: 69% opposed to extending Iraq law, 75% see Iraq war as "wrong"

ASAHI (Page 2) (Abridged)
March 15, 2007

According to findings from a telephone-based nationwide public opinion survey conducted by the Asahi Shimbun on March 10-11, 69% answered "no" when asked whether Japan should continue the Air Self-Defense Force's mission in Iraq by extending the Iraq Special Measures Law, which is to expire in July. What lies behind the figure is the public's criticism of the United States' Iraq policy. In January this year, US President Bush announced a new strategic plan to send reinforcements to Iraq. In the survey, however, a total of 70% took a critical view of the new strategy, saying it will not lead to the stabilization of public security in Iraq.

Japan has been deploying ASDF troops in Iraq to back up US and other Iraq-based multinational force troops with airlift activities. This ASDF deployment is based on the Iraq Special Measures Law. In response to the US government's decision to send reinforcements to Iraq, the Japanese government has now decided to extend the law to continue the ASDF deployment past July. In the survey, 19% were in favor of extending the law. The Abe cabinet, as was the Koizumi cabinet, remains committed to Japan's support for the Bush administration's Iraq policy. When asked whether Japan should continue its cooperation, however, "yes" accounted for only 18%, with 69% saying the government should review Japan's cooperation.

Respondents were also asked whether they thought the United States' military operations for its "war on terror," now expanded from Afghanistan to Iraq, have led to antiterror deterrence. In response to this question, "yes" accounted for 24%, and "no" at 57%. Respondents were further asked about the Iraq war itself. In response, those regarding it as right accounted for only 12%, with 75% seeing it as wrong.

6) US ambassador to Japan calls on Japan to increase defense spending

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)

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March 15, 2007

US Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer yesterday said in a speech in Tokyo that the United States devoted 4% of its GDP to its national defense budget. And referring to Japan's defense spending, Schieffer said, "(Japan's defense budget) is 1% of its GDP. We hope to see Japan increase the budget. The more contributions from Japan, the better." He thus called on Japan to increase its defense budget.

7) US Ambassador calls for Japan to bear due burden regarding defense spending

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
March 15, 2007

In a speech in Tokyo yesterday, United States Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer said that the share of Japan's defense spending to gross domestic product (GDP) is smaller than that of the US. Schieffer expressed his hope for Japan's greater burden, citing modernized military forces and other reasons.

The ambassador stated in the speech, "The US forces in Japan, which have contributed to maintaining peace in Asia as a whole, are pushing forward the modernization of their capabilities." He then called for Japan to shoulder a due burden in proportion to its economic scale, remarking:

"The US paid more than 4% of GDP for defense expenses in 2005. It has disbursed funds also for the sake of Japan and its concerned areas. Meanwhile, the ratio is less than 1% in the case of Japan. An increase in Japan's defense spending will have a favorable effect on our nation."

8) US ambassador to Japan seeks increase in Japan's defense budget, noting, "US defense expenditures are 10 times more than in Japan"

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)
March 15, 2007

US Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer yesterday gave a speech in Tokyo. In the speech he called for strengthening Japan-US defense cooperation in such areas as missile defense. He stressed that Japan's share in defense cooperation is insufficient, saying: "Japan's national defense budget is less than 1% of its GDP, while that of the US is over 4%. US taxpayers are shouldering more than 10 times the burden of Japanese taxpayers. I hope Japanese taxpayers will share more burdens. It costs a great deal to protect national interests."

Japan's defense budget is 4.8139 trillion yen in fiscal 2006, while that of the US is 512 billion dollars or approximately 60.41 trillion yen in fiscal 2007.

9) US ambassador stresses need to resolve abduction and other pending issues as precondition for normalizing relations with North Korea

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
March 15, 2007

United States Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer delivered a

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speech in Tokyo yesterday, in which he stressed that the US regards the settlement of all pending issues, including the nuclear and abduction issues, as the precondition for normalizing its diplomatic ties with North Korea. The ambassador stated:

"The agreement (in the six-party talks in September 2005) specifies that all issues, including nuclear, humanitarian, and human rights issues, must be settled. The US will normalize its relations with North Korea for the first time after seeing many issues disposed of."

10) 500 guests attend joint Japan-US memorial service on Iwo Jima

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 28) (Full)
March 15, 2007

A joint Japan-US memorial service was held yesterday on Iwo Jima (Ogasawara Village in Tokyo), which was a fierce battleground during World War II. About 500 former soldiers from both sides, bereaved families of the war dead, and US Marines in Okinawa attended the event. The participants prayed for the roughly 28,700 people who died in the battle.

The Battle of Iwo Jima was in the news because of two films Clint Eastwood directed from both the Japanese and American viewpoints. Many books related to the battle have also been published. Because of the films and books, the battle has now drawn wider attention in Japan.

The event took place before the memorial tombstone for Japan-US reunion. Iwo Jima Association Chairman Yoshiki Endo, 84, a resident of Yokosuka City, Kanagawa Prefecture, said in a speech:

"I lament that the sorrow and suffering of the bereaved families of the war dead have been forgotten these days. We should hand down the battle from generation to generation so that we will never repeat such a terrible war."

An association of former US Marines returned to Japan items that had been brought home after the war. Japanese and US individuals connected with the battle offered flowers at the memorial.

11) ACCJ to honor Hiroshi Okuda for contributing to Japan-US economic relationship

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 5) (Full)
March 15, 2006

The American Chamber of Commerce in Japan yesterday selected Hiroshi Okuda, advisor to Toyota Motor, as its person of the year for 2006 to honor persons who contributed to the development of Japan-US economic relationship. The reason for his selection is that he contributed to creating job opportunities in the US when he was Toyota's president and chairman.

Asked about the possibility of Akio Toyoda, the eldest son of the founding family of Toyota, becoming president, Okuda, after saying that he could not reply to such a delicate question, bewildered reporters with this reply: "The criteria for leadership in the 21st century is being able to hear the footsteps of God. I don't know how many such people there are in Toyota, but the next president will be picked from among them."

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12) Congressman Honda received \$110,000 in political donations from Chinese-Americans last year; Working with anti-Japanese organizations on "comfort women" issue

SANKEI (Top play) (Excerpts)
March 15, 2007

Yoshihisa Komori, Washington

It was learned as of yesterday that Representative Mike Honda, who introduced a resolution condemning Japan over the "comfort women" issue in the US House of Representatives, has had a high reliance on political donations from Chinese-Americans in the past elections. Chinese contributors included a number of senior members of anti-Japanese organizations based in the United States but apparently linked to Chinese authorities. It also turns out that Honda's pursuit of Japan's "war responsibility" for many years had been closely linked to those Chinese-affiliated organizations.

According to an investigation by the Sankei Shimbun based on the reports released by the US Center for Responsive Politics (CRP), Honda received a total of \$370,000 in political donations from 449

individuals for the House of Representatives election in 2006. Of that amount, approximately \$110,000 came from 94 Chinese-Americans. This number of contributors and this amount accounted for 21% of the total and 30% of the total, respectively. Honda was elected in California's 15th Congressional District, where 29% of the population is Asian-American, of whom Chinese-Americans account for only 9%.

Of the donations by Chinese-Americans to Honda, some 40% was contributed by Chinese-Americans outside California. Donations other House of Representatives received outside their electorates accounted for about 10% or so. Compared to them, it is clear that Honda received donations from Chinese-Americans across the country. This percentage was unusually high.

South Korea should have been deeply involved in the comfort women issue, but when it comes to donations by Korean-Americans to Honda, the amount Honda received in 2006 totaled \$7,000 from 10 Korean-Americans. This amount was one-tenth of the donations from Chinese-Americans. This fact confirms how influential Chinese-Americans are.

13) LDP parliamentary group to continue investigation into comfort women issue

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)
March 15, 2007

The group of lawmakers considering Japan's future and history education, composed of Liberal Democratic Party's likeminded lawmakers under Chairman Nariaki Nakayama, has decided to continue investigating the wartime comfort women issue, focusing on whether the Imperial Japanese Army coerced young women into sexual slavery and other points. The decision came in response to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe saying that the government would render cooperation, for instance, by presenting data if the LDP reinvestigates the issue. Chairman Nakayama will present the proposal during a meeting of the group shortly. The plan is likely to be approved.

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14) Prime Minister Abe: "I will decide whether to extend Iraq Special Measures Law on my own judgment"

ASAHI (Page 2) (Full)
March 15, 2007

In a recent public opinion poll, 70% of respondents opposed an extension of the Iraq Special Measures Law. Regarding this survey result, Prime Minister Abe said before reporters yesterday: "While taking the security situation in Iraq and other elements into consideration, I will decide on whether to extend the law on my own judgment."

He then stressed the significance of the dispatch of Self-Defense Force (SDF) troops to Iraq, remarking:

"Japan has dispatched SDF personnel from the viewpoint of fulfilling its international responsibility. Iraqi people have expressed great appreciation. I want the people to also understand this."

15) Prime minister determined to secure Diet passage for national referendum bill during current session

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)
March 15, 2007

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe yesterday had lunch with Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) freshman Lower House lawmakers. During lunch, he indicated a strong desire to get Diet approval for the national referendum bill that stipulates procedures for revising the Constitution, noting: "I will get Diet passage for the national referendum bill by all means. I think this is possible because so many LDP candidates were elected."

This was Abe's second informal discussion meeting with freshman Diet

members following the one held on Mar. 7. Approximately 40 members took part. Some participants criticized Agriculture Minister Toshikatsu Matsuoka for his political funds issue. The prime minister said, "I understand this issue is causing trouble," but he reportedly did not touch on how he is going to deal with this issue.

16) Government plan for JNSC: Permanent post for special advisor to prime minister not to be created

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
March 15, 2007

A bill amending the National Security Council Establishment Law intended to establish a Japan National Security Council (JNSC) next April has been outlined. According to the outline, a right to demand information from related government agencies will be created so that the JNSC can obtain key information without the fetter of bureaucratic sectionalism. In the meantime, the bill will not mention the establishment of a permanent post for a special advisor to the prime minister. The government is expected to submit the bill to the Diet in late March.

The Council to Reinforce the Functions of the Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei) Regarding National Security in late March compiled a set of proposals, including the establishment of a permanent post for a special advisor to the prime minister in charge

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of national security issues. However, due to opposition that the establishment of such a post would confuse relations with the chief cabinet secretary, as a senior member of the Cabinet Secretariat put it, the government has given up the idea of amending the Cabinet Law, which stipulates the special advisor system. It instead decided to mention in the regulation on attendance in cabinet meetings the status of a special advisor as a semi-member of the cabinet meeting who can take part in meetings of a small number of cabinet ministers. As such, whether a permanent post for a special advisor to the prime minister will be established will be up to whoever is in power as prime minister in the future to decide.

The bill will also include a regulation allowing the JNSC to demand the chiefs of related government agencies provide information. This will be part of efforts to establish a system for the JNCS, which will consist of a cabinet meeting with small membership for conferring on long-term strategy and a staff organization with 10 to 20 members, to obtain necessary information from various government agencies.

17) Japan hosts first four-party talks on Middle East peace

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)
March 15, 2007

Jin Omae

The first four-party meeting on the Middle East peace process took place at Japan's Foreign Ministry's Iikura Guest House in Tokyo yesterday. This framework is the first occasion for Japan to be fully engaged in the peace process. Joining the meeting were cabinet-level officials from Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Jordan, and Japan. On Japan's proposal for constructing an agricultural industrial park in the West Bank, the meeting agreed to send a fact-finding team to the area by the end of the month, hold working-level talks in June and look for a candidate location for the construction.

The session was held in line with the idea of creating a Corridor for Peace and Prosperity as proposed in last July by then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. The officials participating in the session were Foreign Minister Taro Aso, Israel's Deputy Prime Minister Peres, PLO Negotiations Affairs Department chief Erekat, and Special Advisor to the King of Jordan Kasrawi. Erekat expressed hope: "Japan's vision is important in the sense of bringing peace to the region. It is essential for a third party to play a role."

Later in the day, Aso announced grant aid to the Palestinians worth 12.6 million dollars (1.487 billion yen) for medical assistance and job creation. The third round of confidence-building talks of high-level government officials and experts from Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and other countries also began in Tokyo.

18) Futenma relocation: Government notifies Okinawa of its plan to begin preliminary environmental assessment in April

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 1) (Full)
March 15, 2007

The government has notified Okinawa that it will begin a preliminary survey in April before the planned environmental assessment of Nago, the relocation site for the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station,

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according to an informed source yesterday. The prefectural government has yet to convey a reply to the central government. Obtaining concurrence of local governments is not required to conduct an environmental assessment. The central government plans to determine a contractor to conduct the preliminary survey later this month to begin the survey in early April.

The government wants to start the survey early because dugongs lay eggs in May through June in waters around Camp Schwab, the relocation site. The assessment must include the survey of the growth of dugongs for a year starting with their egg-laying period. Missing this year's egg-laying period would force the government to delay the survey for a year thereby forcing Tokyo and Washington to miss their target of the new base making operational in 2014.

The Environmental Assessment Law requires a set of procedures, including: (1) presentation of documents detailing assessment methods to the prefectural government from the enterprising body (the government), and (2) hearing of views from people, including the public, for a month and a half. This process will take at least two months. Tokyo intends to conduct full-fledged negotiations with local governments on launching the assessment once the April 22 Upper House Okinawa by-election is over.

19) Foreign Minister Aso to leave for South Korea on March

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
March 15, 2007

Foreign Minister Taro Aso will make a two-day trip to South Korea from March 31. He will hold talks with Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister Song Min Soon. The two foreign ministers will discuss the issue of Japan-South Korea talks on the demarcation of the boundaries of their exclusive economic zones (EEZs) in the Sea of Japan, as well as their response to the six-party talks on North Korean nuclear weapons program.

20) Foreign Minister Aso to visit India in April

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
March 15, 2007

Foreign Minister Taro Aso has decided to visit India on April 3-4. He is expected to meet with his Indian counterpart Pranab Mukherjee. He also plans to attend the summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to announce Japan's policy of supporting the SAARC's efforts for democratization and economic growth.

21) LDP Secretary General Nakagawa to meet in Beijing with President Hu Jintao

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)
March 15, 2007

Ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Secretary General Hidenao Nakagawa and New Komeito Secretary General Kazuo Kitagawa will visit China on March 15-19. The two ruling coalition leaders will meet with President Hu Jintao on March 16 to hand him Prime Minister

Shinzo Abe's letter. The purpose of their China visit is to strengthen bilateral relations by exchanging views on such issues as North Korea's nuclear weapons program, as well as to pave the way

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for a visit to Japan in April by Premier Wen Jiabao.

SCHIEFFER